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ABSTRACT

This annual report shows the number and percentage of students retained in grade at the conclusion of the 1987-88 school year in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Statistical data were gathered from a principal's report and a student survey. The following findings are presented: (1) in June of 1988, 29,205 students were retained; (2) the district retention rate has dropped from 5.6 percent in June 1984 to 4.95 percent in June 1988; (3) the retention rate for both elementary and junior high school students dropped from the previous year, while the rate for senior high school students rose slightly; (4) approximately 58 percent of the retainees in June 1988 were male; (5) retention rates for high school students were several times higher than for elementary or junior high school students; (6) the highest retention rate for elementary school students was in grade 1 (4.06 percent); (7) the highest retention rates for secondary school students were in grade 10 (24.31 percent) and grade 9 (18.78 percent); and (8) although the percentage of black students retained dropped from 6.07 percent in 1987 to 5.53 percent in 1988, these students had the highest retention rate of any ethnic/racial group. Statistical data are presented in a graph. A copy of the LAUSD retention policy and five tables of statistical data are appended. (FMW)

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RETENTION PATTERNS IN THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT JUNE 1988

PUBLICATION NO. 534

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PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT BRANCH

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

UD 028 009

RETENTION PATTERNS IN THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT JUNE 1988

PUBLICATION NO. 534

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June 1989

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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RETENTION PATTERNS IN THE
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
JUNE 1988

Executive Summary

What is the Background for this Study?

The Los Angeles Unified School District produces the annual Retention Patterns report to show the number and percentage of students retained in grade at the conclusion of the school term. The findings are grouped by sex, grade, and ethnicity to suggest potential trends in retention patterns.

How were the Data Collected?

Retention data for this report were obtained from the Principal's School Report, Form 3, completed in October 1988. Enrollment data were obtained from the ethnic survey of students, Form 7, completed in October 1987.

What are the Findings?

- In June of 1988, 29,205 LAUSD students were retained.
- The district retention rate has dropped from 5.60% in June 1984 to 4.95% in June 1988.
- The retention rate for both elementary and junior high school students dropped from last year, while this rate rose slightly for senior high school students.
- Approximately 58% of the retainees in June 1988 were male.
- Retention rates for high school students (grades 9-12) were several times higher than for elementary (K-6) or junior high (6-9) students.
- The highest retention rate for elementary pupils was that for grade 1 (4.06%).

- For secondary students, the highest retention rates were for grade 10 (24.31%) and grade 9 (18.78%).

- Although the percentage of Black students retained dropped from 6.07% in 1987 to 5.53% in 1988, these students had the highest retention rate.

Introduction

The annual report on retention in grades K-12 is produced for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) by the Program Evaluation and Assessment Branch. This report is based upon data obtained from the Annual School Program Survey conducted each October, but does not include children's centers, adult schools, or occupational centers.

Retention Policy in LAUSD

Retention is a placement option used when there is reasonable expectation that continued experience in the same grade will be best for the student. Recommendations for retention are to be based on a continuous and thorough analysis of the student's personal and educational development, and the possible benefit derived from such retention. This policy is implemented by the local school administrative and teaching staffs in close consultation with the student's parents. For a description of the LAUSD retention policy, see Appendix A.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the retention patterns of LAUSD. The differences in regard to sex, ethnicity, and grade level have been presented as well as a group summary of the district. In addition, differences across years were studied for any longitudinal trends.

Procedure

Reports of students retained at the end of 1987-88 school year were submitted by all schools in October 1988 as part of the annual fall survey. The survey's Form 3 provided retention data by grade, sex, and ethnicity for June 1988, whereas Form 7 supplied similar categories for enrollment data in October 1987.

Findings

The percentage of retentions for June 1988 was 4.95% for the district, indicating the continuation of a downward trend which began in 1984 (see Figure 1 and Table B-1--tables appear in Appendix B).

Table B-2 presents enrollment and retention figures by sex of student and by administrative region/division. The data indicate that males have a higher retention rate than females (5.57% and 4.29%, respectively).

Table B-3 outlines the percentage of students retained by ethnicity and region/division. While specific enrollment and retention figures are not presented, the "percentage retained" rate represents the number of students retained divided by the number of students enrolled. This manner of presenting information facilitates comparisons within and between ethnic classifications. For example, the retention rates across ethnic categories within the Senior High Schools Division are presented in the row "Senior High, Continuation, and Opportunity." The overall percentage for students retained in this group is 17.05%. In a sense,

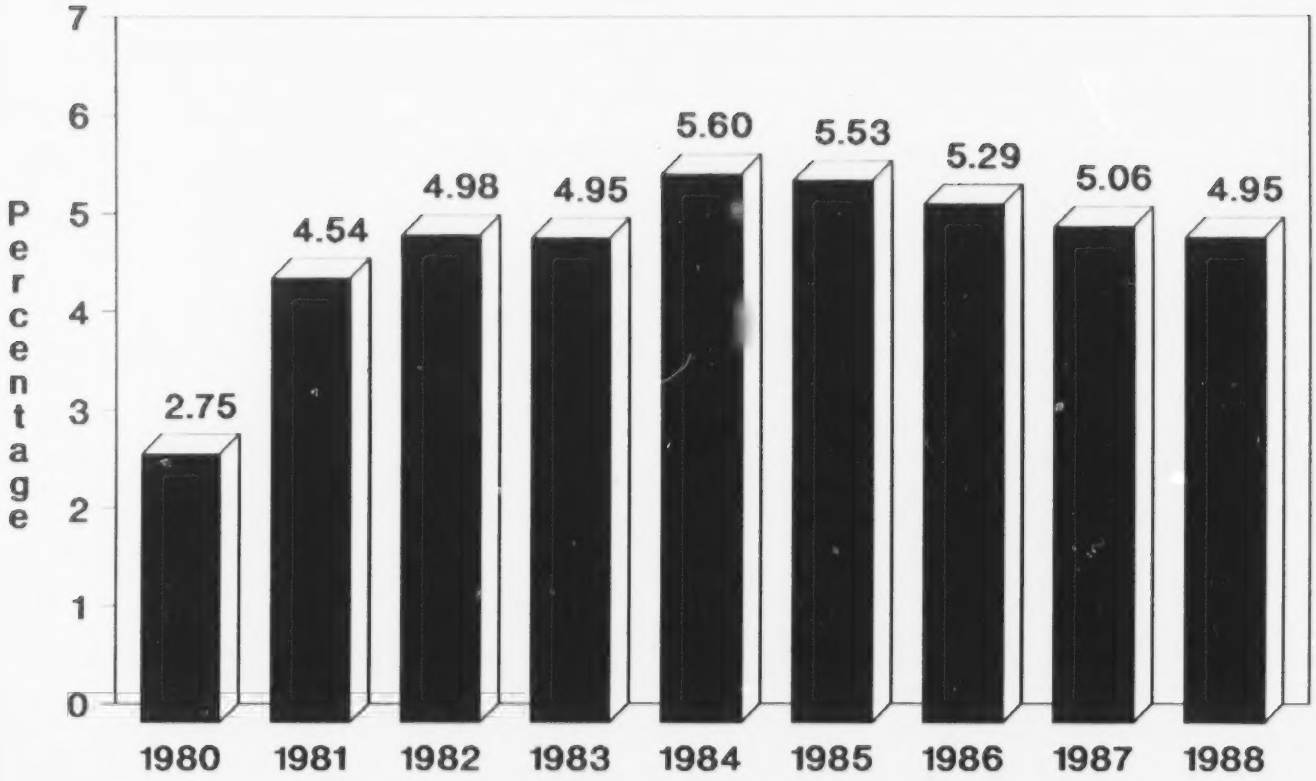

Figure 1. Percentage of students retained in the LAUSD, 1980-88.

this average value, 17.05%, is an expected rate, against which ethnic group comparisons within the division can be made. Such comparisons reveal that Hispanic and Black students have higher than expected retention rates (20.85% and 18.91%, respectively), whereas American Indian and Asian students have lower than expected retention rates (5.19% and 7.37%, respectively).

Information on a single ethnic category is available by examining the rows of Table B-3. The data indicate that Black students have the highest retention rate, with an average of 5.53%. It is important to note, however, that this figure reflects a sizeable drop from last year's 6.07%. The next highest retention rate is that for Hispanic students (5.37%), a figure up slightly from last year's 5.30%.

Table B-4 presents enrollment and retention rates by type of school and administrative region/division. The Senior High Schools Division had the highest retention rate overall (17.05%). Elementary schools had a higher retention rate than junior high schools, while magnet centers and programs generally retained the fewest students. Compared to last year, elementary and junior high schools had a lower percentage of students retained, whereas senior high schools posted a small increase.

The enrollment and retention rates broken down by grade and type of school are presented in Table B-5. In elementary schools, 1st graders are retained at the highest rate (4.06%) while the rate for 6th graders is lowest (0.19%). The highest retention rates among students in the Senior High Schools Division are for grade 10 and grade 9 (24.31% and 18.78%, respectively). Junior high school 9th graders are retained at a very low rate (1.40%).

Compared to the June 1987 report (Publication No. 522), retention at elementary schools was lower at each grade in June 1988. The same downward trend is true for each junior high school grade. However, for senior high schools, only grade 9 showed a drop in retention rate (from 20.03% in 1987 to 18.78% in 1988), whereas the rates increased for grades 10, 11, and 12.

While the percentage of retained students in opportunity and continuation high schools appears high, it may be artificially inflated because of missing students in the enrollment counts. Because enrollment data are collected in October of each year and many students enroll in continuation and opportunity schools after this time, they are not counted in the October enrollment but may be included in the retention counts for the following June. Therefore, the percentage of retention for continuation and opportunity may be artificially high and should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The results indicate that the average retention rate in June 1988 is 4.95%, continuing a downward trend which started in 1984. Notable interethnic differences in retention rates continue, as do differences between regions/divisions and school types. In short, while providing much valuable information, the data upon which this report is based raise many compelling questions.

Research designed to identify reasons for differences in retention rates between groups of students described in this report should be

undertaken. Results of such research might suggest ways of maintaining low retention rates and reducing high retention rates, where they exist.

Appendix A

Retention Policy in LAUSD

RETENTION POLICY IN LAUSD

Roles/Responsibilities for Retention

Promotion or retention is based on a student's reasonable progress in meeting district standards of achievement (Reference: Bulletin No. 12, Promotion Policy--K-12, Office of Instruction, August 14, 1979; Bulletin No. 24, Reporting Students Progress in K-5 and in K-6 Elementary Schools, April 15, 1986).

1. Responsibility for the individual's promotion to the next grade is a shared effort among administrator, teacher, counselor/supportive staff, and parent. While the principal is responsible for the final decision regarding the promotion/retention of pupils in junior and senior high school, no decision to retain an elementary school student may be made without the prior written approval or consent of the student's parent or legal guardian.

2. In order to establish a definitive profile of the student's progress, certain records and appropriate documentation must be maintained.

   a. Teacher records must substantiate any recommendation.

   b. School organization data must substantiate alternatives or repeated opportunities for instruction.

   c. Cumulative files and attendance cards must indicate such items as performance test scores, progress, effort, and attendance.

   d. Dates of parent conferences must be noted.

3. The teacher is responsible for assigning the final mark and for recommending promotion or retention based upon assessment of reasonable progress.

4. Parent conferences shall be held as soon as it becomes evident that a student is not achieving or maintaining reasonable progress.

Retention at the Elementary Level

1. The decision to promote is based on evaluation of individual progress and ability to achieve the measures of reasonable progress. Pupil success at grades K, 1, and 2 is most important before promotion to the upper grades, where increasing instructional requirements and/or length of instructional day occur.

2. Retention at grade 6 is recommended only after other alternatives have been exhausted.

3. Beginning with the 1986-87 school year, no decision to retain an elementary student shall be made without the prior written approval or consent of the student's parent or legal guardian.

Retention at the Junior High Level

1. The retention policy at the junior high school level is developed at each school within the limits established by Board policy. Failure to complete one or more of the requirements below may result in retention of the student.

   a. Success with the district's performance tests of essential skills.

   b. Success in the required and elective course content (or its equivalent) during any semester in grades 7-9, as measured by teacher evaluation.

   c. Progress in emotional, physical, and intellectual growth; exploration experiences; assimilation and application of skills; and socialization.

   d. Satisfactory completion of a course of study by achieving passing marks in courses representing at least 50 semester credits in the last 2 semesters. The completion of at least 4 semesters of attendance in a junior high school or its equivalent.

2. The principal of the junior high school may advance a failing pupil because of overage.

Retention at the Senior High Level

Policies governing promotion or retention of the senior high school student are determined by the number of credits earned within the framework of graduation requirements at the local school. Among the acceptable practices are the following:

1. A student is permitted to make up failures and other deficiencies in summer school in order to stay with his/her class. Although summer school classes carry credit, the student should make certain the credit will count toward graduation. Credit, for example, cannot be granted twice for the same subject as would be the case if a pupil repeated in order to improve a mark.

2. In exceptional cases, a student may be permitted to attend an adult school class in addition to day classes (Administrative Guide 2102).

3. A student who has been demoted is reinstated with the regular class as soon as the deficiencies have been made up. The counselor not only works with the student to help him/her improve, but also must solicit the cooperation of the parents. This may be done by letter, phone call, or conference.

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Appendix B

Tables

Table B-1

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by District Totals, 1979-80 Through 1987-88

School year	Enrolled October	Retained June	Percentage retained
1979-80	547,469	15,082	2.75
1980-81	539,646	24,524	4.54
1981-82	540,803	26,947	4.98
1982-83	549,198	27,168	4.95
1983-84	556,047	31,161	5.60
1984-85	565,189	31,233	5.53
1985-86	578,962	30,638	5.29
1986-87	588,642	29,786	5.06
1987-88	590,064	29,205	4.95

Note. Enrollment figures are based on the final report of each October's ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures are based on the principals' reports from the annual survey each October, providing totals for the previous June.

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Table B-2

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by Region/Division, and Sex, 1987-88

Region/ division	Sex	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
A	Male	25,953	481	1.85
	Female	23,968	301	1.26
	Total	49,921	782	1.57
B	Male	30,948	568	1.84
	Female	29,822	383	1.28
	Total	60,770	951	1.56
C	Male	28,992	441	1.52
	Female	27,894	248	0.89
	Total	56,886	689	1.21
D	Male	28,860	467	1.62
	Female	27,297	264	0.97
	Total	56,157	731	1.30
E	Male	30,260	679	2.24
	Female	28,869	416	1.44
	Total	59,129	1,095	1.85
F	Male	32,698	614	1.88
	Female	30,590	388	1.27
	Total	63,288	1,002	1.58
G	Male	27,496	298	1.08
	Female	26,177	209	0.80
	Total	53,673	507	0.94
H	Male	27,035	458	1.69
	Female	25,653	352	1.37
	Total	52,688	810	1.54
A-H	Male	232,242	4,006	1.72
	Female	220,270	2,561	1.16
	Total	452,512	6,567	1.45

Table B-2 (continued)

Region/ division	Sex	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
Senior high	Male	68,786	12,905	18.76
	Female	63,959	9,731	15.21
	Total	132,745	22,636	17.05
Special education	Male	2,774	1	0.04
	Female	2,033	1	0.05
	Total	4,807	2	0.04
District	Male	303,802	16,912	5.57
	Female	286,262	12,293	4.29
	Total	590,064	29,205	4.95

Note. Enrollment figures are based on October 1987 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1988. Senior high division includes the comprehensive high schools, and magnet, continuation, and opportunity high schools.

RTRP88.2,RSTEVE

Table B-3

Percentage of Students Retained, by Region/Division and Ethnicity, June 1988

Region/ division	Percentage retained, by ethnicity							
	Amer. Indian/ AK Native	Asian	Black	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	Total
A	0.93	0.49	1.25	0.43	1.23	2.11	1.25	1.57
B	0.88	1.15	1.17	0.00	0.00	1.62	2.42	1.57
C	0.00	0.00	1.30	0.00	0.00	1.18	0.50	1.21
D	0.00	0.48	1.35	1.34	0.00	1.82	0.61	1.30
E	0.81	0.57	2.84	0.36	0.00	2.62	1.01	1.85
F	0.00	0.23	1.40	2.66	0.64	2.11	0.92	1.58
G	0.00	1.09	0.64	5.08	0.00	0.94	0.00	0.94
H	0.00	0.63	1.81	0.63	0.00	1.79	1.06	1.54
A-H total	0.33	0.57	1.40	0.87	0.82	1.70	0.97	1.45
Senior high div.	5.19	7.37	18.91	11.47	14.67	20.85	11.30	17.05
Special ed. div.	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.09	0.10
District total	2.11	2.54	5.53	3.62	4.04	5.37	3.98	4.95

Note. Percentage retained represents June 1988 retention figure divided by October 1987 enrollment. Enrollment figures are based on the October 1987 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools and special education. Retention figures for June 1988 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1988. Senior high division includes the comprehensive high schools, and magnet, continuation, and opportunity high schools.

Table B-4

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by Region/Division and Type of School, 1987-88

Region/ division	Type of school	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
A	Elementary	34,065	590	1.73
	Jr. high	13,318	161	1.21
	Magnet	2,538	31	1.22
	Total	49,921	782	1.57
B	Elementary	44,308	885	2.00
	Jr. high	16,007	65	0.41
	Magnet	455	1	0.22
	Total	60,770	951	1.56
C	Elementary	43,203	383	0.89
	Jr. high	11,942	292	2.45
	Magnet	1,741	14	0.80
	Total	56,886	689	1.21
D	Elementary	35,183	578	1.64
	Jr. high	14,596	105	0.72
	Magnet	6,378	48	0.75
	Total	56,157	731	1.30
E	Elementary	38,736	792	2.04
	Jr. high	17,236	264	1.53
	Magnet	3,157	39	1.24
	Total	59,129	1,095	1.85
F	Elementary	41,627	808	1.94
	Jr. high	17,786	181	1.02
	Magnet	3,875	13	0.34
	Total	63,288	1,002	1.58
G	Elementary	40,102	505	1.26
	Jr. high	12,937	2	0.02
	Magnet	634	0	0.00
	Total	53,673	507	0.94

Table B-4 (continued)

Region/ division	Type of school	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
H	Elementary	39,598	750	1.89
	Jr. high	12,567	56	0.45
	Magnet	523	4	0.76
	Total	52,688	810	1.54
A - H	Elementary	316,822	5,291	1.67
	Jr. high	116,389	1,126	0.97
	Magnet	19,301	150	0.78
	Total	452,512	6,567	1.45
Senior high	Senior HS	121,325	20,293	16.73
	Opportunity	1,274	320	25.12
	Continuation	3,150	1,768	56.13
	Magnet	6,996	255	3.64
	Total	132,745	22,636	17.05
Special education	Special ed.	4,807	2	0.04
District	Total	590,064	29,205	4.95

Note. Enrollment figures are based on the October 1987 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures for June 1988 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1988.

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Table B-5

Summary of Retention, by Type of School and Grade, June 1988

Type of school	Grade	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
Elementary	K	47,531	833	1.75
	1	51,467	2,090	4.06
	2	48,743	1,072	2.20
	3	46,412	696	1.50
	4	44,444	329	0.74
	5	44,287	206	0.47
	6	33,533	65	0.19
	Total	316,417	5,291	1.67
Junior high	6	8,953	53	0.59
	7	40,610	351	0.86
	8	39,171	335	0.86
	9	27,654	387	1.40
	Total	116,388	1,126	0.97
Senior high	7	295	0	0.00
	8	318	0	0.00
	9	13,157	2,471	18.78
	10	46,796	11,377	24.31
	11	34,315	4,531	13.20
	12	26,444	1,914	7.24
	Total	121,325	20,293	16.73
Magnet schools/ centers/ programs	K	490	5	1.02
	1	1,144	39	3.41
	2	1,240	23	1.85
	3	1,429	11	0.77
	4	1,916	22	1.15
	5	2,130	8	0.38
	6	2,271	1	0.04
	7	2,827	1	0.04
	8	2,729	3	0.11
	9	2,659	38	1.43
	10	2,949	105	3.56
	11	2,504	101	4.03
	12	1,999	48	2.40
	Total	26,287	405	1.54

Table 5 (continued)

Type of school	Grade	Enrolled October 1987	Retained June 1988	Percentage retained
Opportunity & continuation	7	14	0	0.00
	8	98	3	3.06
	9	658	484	73.56
	10	2,065	935	45.28
	11	986	426	43.20
	12	613	240	39.15
	Total	4,434	2,088	47.09
Special ed.	Total	3,234	2	0.06
District	K-12	588,085	29,205	4.97

Note. Enrollment figures are based on the October 1987 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Data were excluded when grade of student was not known. Retention figures for June 1988 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1988.

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